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REMARKS

The Office Action mailed December 11, 2002 has been reviewed and carefully considered. Claims 54 to 65 have been added. Claims 10 to 65 are pending in this application, with claims 10, 54, and 60 being the independent claims. Reconsideration of the above-identified application, as amended, and in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

It is noted that the file does not contain a Patent Drawing Review by the Patent Office Draftsperson. It is requested that this Review be undertaken and a Review by the Draftsperson be issued in response to this Amendment.

In the Office Action mailed December 11, 2002, claims 14 to 21 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but were deemed to be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim 54 has been added and corresponds to allowed dependent claim 14 written in independent form. For this reason, independent claim 54 is allowable, along with dependent claims 55 to 59.

Claim 60 has been added and corresponds to allowed dependent claim 18 written in independent form. For this reason, independent claim 60 is allowable, along with dependent claims 61 to 65.

Claims 30 to 53 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph because the Examiner indicated that the claims appeared to be process limitations (Office Action, page 2). These claims have been appropriately amended to recite that the surface layer "was" applied, rather than "is" applied. As stated in the specification (page 5, line 16 to page 6, line 9), the characteristics of a coating layer may be different depending upon how the layer has been applied. For these reasons, and because these claims have been amended, withdrawal of this rejection is appropriate.

Claim 10 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,245,582 ("Alheid").

Alheid discloses a rod holder 16 made of the resiliently deformable material. The tightness of the fit of the rod 18 in the cavity 20 of the rod holder 16 is adjusted by altering pressure in a tube 30 positioned between the holder body and the lip portion 24. When the pressure in the tube 30 is increased, the diameter of the cavity 20 decreases. Therefore, the material comprising of the rod holder 16 must be resiliently deformable so as to enable the variations in the diameter of the cavity 20 (see Alheid's claim 1 relating to the bore wall of the

cavity being made of a stiff, resiliently deformable material). Although Alheid mentions that the entire rod holder 16 need not be made of the same material, it merely states that the lip portion 24 can be of metal (col. 7, lines 5-19). Alheid thus does not disclose or suggest that the surfaces of the cavity 20 in which the rod 18 rotates may be covered by a surfacing layer of any kind, as recited in applicant's independent claim 10.

In the invention as recited in independent claim 10, the surface of the cradle of the rod holder is coated with a layer of material improving wear resistance and sliding friction properties of the cradle and rod. The invention provides significant benefits over the rod holder described by Alheid, because the body of the rod holder can be made of material having totally different properties compared to the material of the coating surface layer of the cradle. For example, the rod holder body can be made of soft and elastic material and the surfacing layer of hard and stiff material. Suitable materials for the surface layer are usually not suitable materials for the holder body due to their mechanical properties and high price. In the invention, the material properties of the cradle and the body can be optimised for both purposes. Furthermore, when the coating surface layer of the rod holder cradle has worn away, it can be replaced with a new layer of same or different material.

For these reasons, independent claim 10 is not anticipated by Alheid.

Claim 10 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,019,846 ("Graf").

Graf describes a rod holder wherein the cradle is equipped with longitudinal grooves 32 in which are mounted non-metallic bearing strips 34. The rod 24 rotates on the strips 34. In the invention in accordance with amended independent claim 10, the surface of the cradle on which said rod rotates has a coating surface layer of a material which improves wear resistance and sliding friction properties of the cradle and said rod. This coating surface layer is unitary or integral with the cradle, it is not formed by inserting a strip into a groove, as disclosed in Graf. Graf does not disclose or suggest the use of a coating surface layer.

In fact, as recited in the dependent claims, the coating surface of applicant's invention is preferably fabricated by vacuum deposition technique. Therefore, applicant's coating surfacing layer can be comparatively thin and it will easily conforms to the shape of the cradle surface. No grooves or other fastening arrangements are needed, as in Graf's rod holder. For these reasons,

applicant's coating surface layer can be easily added as a retrofit to an existing rod holder cradle without the need for machining or other procedures to create Graf's groove.

For these reasons, independent claim 10 is not anticipated by Graf.

For the foregoing reasons, applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 10 is patentable. Dependent claims 11 to 53 are patentable for the same reasons that independent claim 10.

Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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